

Monday | 21 May 2018

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## Skilled labour mobility, educational reforms vital for Asean bloc

Last update: 16/05/2018

KUALA LUMPUR, May 16 (Bernama) -- ASEAN policymakers have been urged to intensify efforts in encouraging skilled labour mobility and educational reforms to address skills deficit brought by the rapid digital revolution.

Although the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) envisioned free movement of skilled labour and business visitors within the bloc, current arrangements are narrow in scope.

The lack of true intra-ASEAN skilled labour mobility within the region would mean the skill gaps among the countries cannot be filled by talents from within the economic community.

These were among the issues discussed during yesterday's roundtable session titled "Closing the Talent and Skills Gap in ASEAN", here, organised by CIMB ASEAN Research Institute (CARI), in collaboration with the ASEAN Business Club.

The roundtable was chaired by Tan Sri Dr Munir Majid, chairman of CARI and president of the ASEAN Business Club.

The panel of speakers comprised CIMB Group chief people officer Datuk Hamidah Naziadin, TalentCorp Malaysia chief executive officer Shareen Shariza Abdul Ghani, Human Resource Development Fund chief executive Datuk CM Vignaesvaran Jeyandran, and partner/head of Southeast Asia at A.T. Kearney, Singapore, Chua Soon Ghee.

According to the World Economic Forum, the ASEAN region is facing serious skills divide.

Fifty-five per cent of Singapore workers are highly skilled, followed by Malaysia at 25 per cent, Philippines at 24 per cent and Thailand at 14 per cent. Highly-skilled workers in Vietnam, Indonesia, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia range from four to 10 per cent.

Munir said: "ASEAN is at a crucial juncture to introduce

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educational reforms at the national level to produce the workforce fit for industry 4.0 that is having a rapid and profound impact on all member states

"With true intra-ASEAN talent mobility for skilled professionals, ASEAN countries will be able to fully optimise their human capital potential"

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